

322

# OF THE NOBILITIE AND EXCELLENCIE OF WOMANKYNDE.



ALMYGHTY GOD  
the maker & nour-  
tisher of all thyn-  
ges, the father  
and goodnesse of  
both male and fe-  
male, of hys great bountyfulnes,  
bath create mankynde lyke unto  
hym selfe, he made them man and  
woman. The diuersitie of which  
two kyndes, standeth onely in the  
sondyr situation of the bodily par-  
tes, in whiche the vse of generati-  
on requirerh a necessary differēce.  
He hath giuen but one similitude  
and lykenes of the soule, to bothe  
male and female, betwene whose  
soules there is noo manner dyffe-

Gen. 1.

A. ii,

rence

# NOBILITIE OF

tence of kynde. The woman hath  
that same mynde that a man hath,  
that same reason and speche, the  
gothe to the same ende of blyssful-  
nes, where shall be noo exception  
of kynde. For after the euangeli-  
call truthe, they that lyfe in theyr  
owne proper kynde, shall not vse  
the offyce of theyr kynde, but the  
lykenes of angelles is promysed  
vnto theym. And thus betwene  
man and woman by substance of  
the soule, one hath no higher pre-  
emyence of nobyltye aboue the  
other, but both of them natural-  
ly haue equall libertie of dignitie  
and worthynesse. But all other  
thynges, the which be in man, be-  
sydes the dyuine substance of the  
soule, in those thynges the excel-  
lente and noble womanheed in a  
maner insynptely dothe excell the  
gude

LUC. 20.

MARC. 12.

MAT. 23.



rude grosse kynd of men, the whiche  
 che thyng we shall playnly proue  
 to be true, not with counterfayte  
 and fayre flatterynge wordes, nor  
 also with the subtyll sophismes of  
 Logike, wherewith many sophi-  
 sters were wont to blynde and de-  
 cepe men, but by the auctorytpe  
 of mooste excellent auctours, and  
 true writers of historys, and with  
 manifest reasons, yea with the te-  
 stimonies of holpe scripture, and  
 by the ordynances and constitu-  
 tions of lawes.

**C**fyrst to enter into this matter  
 the womā is made so muche moze  
 excellent than man, in howe mo-  
 che the name that she hath recey-  
 ued, is moze excellent than hye.  
 For Adam soundeth Erthe, but  
 Eua is interpretate lyfe: and as  
 moche as the lyfe doth excel erth.

## NORILITIE OF

So moche the woman is to be preferred aboue the man. For there is no cause why this shulde be called a feble argumēt, to gyue iugement of thynges by the names. For we knowe, that the hyghe artificer and maker of thinges and names, fyrst dyd knowe the thynges, befoze he named them, which for as moch as he could not be deceyued, for thys purpose he made the names, that it myght expresse the nature, pꝛopertie, and vse of the thyng. For the trouthe of any que names is suche, as the veray Romayne lawes testifie, that the selfe names are consonāt to the thinges, and manifest significations of them. Therfoze an argument of the names of thinges amonges dyuynes and lawyers, is of greate weyghte. As we rede  
w. pt.

written of Nabal, after his name  
is a sole, and folpshenes is with  
him. Of this Paule in hys Epi-  
stle to the Hebrewes, purposynge  
to shewe the excellency of Chyste  
bleth this argument, sayeng: that  
he is made as moch more excellēt  
than the aungels, as he hath enhe-  
rited a name more excellent than  
they. And in an other place, God  
hath gyuen hym a name, the whi-  
che is aboue al names, that in the  
name of Jesu, euery knee shall  
bowe both of thynges in heauen,  
of thynges vpon earth & of thyng-  
ges vnder the earth. Further (this  
thyng to approue) there is no  
small strengthe of lawes, compres-  
hended and conteyned in the bonds  
of woordes, in signification of  
woordes, in conditions and demon-  
strations, in conditions annexed,

Hebr. 1.

Phil. 2.

A.iii. and

# NOBILITIE OF

and suche other kyndes of dysputations, and highe poyntes, and tytles of the lawe, as in the same tytles, and other lyke, a man may perceyue. For soo we make argumente and reasons in the lawe of the interpretation of the name, also of the strength of the word and vocable. Moreover, of the interpretation of the name, and also of the dyscription, and composition and order of the worde. For the lawes them selves do quykely and sharpely consyder the significations of the names, that of the they myghte some thynge interpretate.

Cypri. de  
montibus.  
Syna et  
Syon.

Also Cyprian againste the Jewes argueth, that the fyrste man, Adam, receyved bys name of the iiii. principall partes of the world. that is, East, west, North, and South



Southe, and in the same booke he  
dothe expound the same name, A-  
dam, because erth was made flesh,  
althoughe suche exposition dothe  
dyffer from the tradition and tea-  
chyng of Moyses, sens among the  
Hebrewes it is not wyrtten with  
foure but with. iii. letters. yet for  
all that, this exposition in so holy  
a man is not to be dyspraysed, for  
as moche as he was not lerned in  
the Hebrew tongue, the whiche  
verye many saynctes and exposy-  
tours of holpe scrypture, to theyr  
small blame knewe not. But if I  
can not haue lyke leaue and liber-  
tye for the praysse of womanheed,  
after my mynde and iugement, to  
vse lyke etymologie and declara-  
tion of the word and name of Eue,  
at the leaste lette me be suffered to  
speake this one thyng out of the

A.v.

mist-

# NOBILITIE OF

muslicall decrees, and agreeable  
wylles of the Cabalists, the very  
name of a woman to haue more  
affinitie with the ineffable and in-  
enarrable name of the diuine po-  
wer almyghtye, called Tetragrama-  
maton, than the name of man, the  
whiche with the name of god, nei-  
ther in letters no; in figure, no; in  
nombze doth agree.

**B**ut now we wylle leaue these  
thynges, for they be redde of few,  
and of few vnderstande & they  
requyre a longer processe than is  
mete to be spoken of here. In the  
meane season, we wol serche oute  
the excellencie of womanheed, not  
of the name onely, but of the very  
thynges, dueties, and merites.

Therfor let vs (as they say) serch  
the scriptures and takynge oute  
grounde at the fyrste creation, let

vs

his dispute and reason, what dignitie woman obteyned aboue mā, whanne she was fyrste made. we knowe, that whatso euer god almyghty made, do chiefly differre in this point, that certain of them shuld abyde and remayn for euer more incorruptible and withoute putrification, and certaine shuld be subiecte vnto corruption, mutabilitie and change. And in creatinge those thynges, god proceeded forwarde, after this order he beganne at the more noble and excellent of one thyng, and ended at the most noble of an other. And thus he created incorruptible angels and soules: for so doth saint Augustyne dispute & reason, that the soules of our fyrste parentes, were created with angels, before the bodyes were made. Further-

Aug. sup.  
Gen. ii. 7.

more

# NOBILITIE OF

more he created incorruptible bodies, as the heuē's, the sterres and the elementes incorruptible, but subiecte to dyuers mutations: of the whiche he made al other thinges that be subiecte vnto corruption. From the more byler by seuerall degrees and orders of dignitie, agayne ascendyng and goinge by vnto the perfection of the hole worlde. Firste he made minerals: thanne thynges vegetable plantes and trees: after that thinges lyuinges, than brute beastes, some creppynge, some swymmyng, some steppynge. Fynally he created two creatures lyke to hym selfe, fyrst the male, and last the females: in whiche female, the heuens, the erthe, and al the goodly ornamēt of the same, were perfected and fully finished. For the maker com-  
myng

Gen. 2.



mynge to the creation of woman;  
 rested at her, as haupnge befoze  
 his handes nothyng moze hono-  
 rable to be made, and in her al the  
 wisdom and power of the crea-  
 toz came to conclusion and ende:  
 after the which there can no crea-  
 ture be found oꝝ imagined. Than  
 seing a woman is the last of crea-  
 tures, the full ende, mozte perfect  
 of all goddis woꝝkes, and of the  
 same the very perfection: who wol  
 deny a woman to be the most woꝝ-  
 thy & mozte excellent of all creatu-  
 res: without whom þe very world,  
 now beynge fynished, and in all  
 thynges mozte perfectly accom-  
 plished, shulde haue ben vnper-  
 fecte, the whiche coude none other  
 wyse be persfited, thanne with the  
 mooste perfectest of al creatures.  
 Foꝝ it were ageynst reason and a  
 thyng

# NOBILITIE OF

thynges, vnsemely to thynke, that  
 god wold finish so gret a worke in  
 any vnperfect thing. But bicause  
 the world it selfe, as the absolute,  
 hole, and most perfect cyrcle, was  
 created of god, the same cyrcle  
 must nedes be ended in that lyttel  
 parte, whiche myghte couple and  
 ioyne within it selfe the fyrste of  
 all thynges with the laste of all  
 thynges with one knotte. So a  
 woman, whanne the worlde was  
 made, was the laste in tyme, and  
 laste made: and the same woman  
 partly in auctoryty, but chesely in  
 dignitie, was the fyrst of all thin-  
 ges, conceived in the mynde of  
 god as it is wyrtten of her by the  
 prophete: Before the heuens were  
 made, god dyd chose her, and he  
 chose her, befoze all other creatu-  
 res. For this is a common con-  
 clusion

clusion among philosophers (if I  
 maye vse theyr wordes) The ende  
 alway is in the fyrst chereion, and  
 in the dede is the laste. So a wo-  
 man was the laste worke of god,  
 formed into this world as quene  
 of the same, into her prepared pa-  
 layce, garnyshe with all pleasu-  
 res plentyfully. Therfore euery  
 creature worthely loueth reueren-  
 ceth & serueth her, and worthly  
 is subiect, and obeyeth vnto her,  
 which is of al creatures the abso-  
 lute quene, ende, perfeccion, & glo-  
 ry by al wayes and meanes. Wher-  
 fore the wyse man saythe, who so  
 hath god with him, triumpseth, and  
 in harte comendeth the gentil na-  
 ture of woman, ye and the lord of  
 all thynges hym selfe loueth her.  
 ¶ By reason of the place also, in  
 whiche the woman was created,  
 howe

Arist. vl. 3.  
 de auditu.

Sapi. 3.

# NOBILITIE OF

howe fatte she passeth man in noblenesse, holy wytte both witnesse vnto vs mooste plentifullye. For where the woman was made in Paradyse, a place mooste noble and pleasaunt, Amonge aungels: the man was made withoute Paradyse, in the wyelde fyeelde amonge brute beastes. Afterward, to thintent, that woman shuld be created, he was brought into Paradyse. And therfore the woman, endowed with the peculpat gyfte of Nature, as she were accustomed to be in the highest place of her creatiō, though she loke downward from neuer so high a place, yet she neyther suffereth nor feleth any whirling or swimming in her hebd, ne her eies dasyll not, like as it is wonte to chaunce to men.

**F**urthermore, if it chance a woman



man to be in lyke peryll of drow-  
nyng with a man, the without a-  
ny outwarde helpe, swymmeth a  
losse longer than the man, whiche  
soner synketh, and goth downe to  
the bottom.

**A**nd that the dygnytie of the  
place maketh moche to the noby-  
litie of manne, the ciuill lawe and  
humaine constitutions do playn-  
ly affirme, and the custome of all  
nations doth chye fly, obserue this  
thyng, not onely in men, but al-  
so in other beastes, yea and in the  
estimation of thynges hauyng no  
lyfe: For the more worthe place,  
that any thing is born or brought  
vp in, the more noble it is iudged.  
Wherfore Isaac commanded his  
sonne Jacob, that he shoulde not  
take a wyfe of the lande of Cana-  
an, but of Mesopotamie in Sy-  
ria,

NOBILITIE OF

10.1. tis, beyng of better estimation.  
And vnto this, is not moche vn-  
lyke, whiche is spoken in the gos-  
pell of Iohn, where Philip said :  
we haue founde Iesus the sonne  
of Ioseph of Nazareth. And Ra-  
thanael said to hym : what good  
can come oute of Nazareth : But  
now let vs speke of other matters

**A** woman doth passe a man in  
the materiall substance of her cre-  
ation. For she was not made of a  
ny creature wantyng lyfe & soule,  
or of the vyle clay or dyte, as the  
man was, but of a matter purifi-  
ed and lyuely, hauyng a reasona-  
ble soule, and a godly minde. Fur-  
thermoze, god made manne of the  
erthe, whiche naturally byngeth  
forthe all kyndes of beastes and  
lyuely creatures, by the working  
together of the heuently influence;  
but

but the woman, aboue al heuenly  
influence and promptnes of na-  
ture, and without any other ope-  
ration & power, was onely made  
of god, full stedfast and perseuerant in  
all thinges, the man in the meane  
season losynge one of his rybbes,  
of the whiche she was made, that  
is to say, Eue of Adam sleeping, and  
that so soundly, that he could not  
fele his ribbe plucked away. And  
thus, man is the worke of nature,  
and womanne the worke of god.  
And therfore the woman is many  
tymes more apt and mete then the  
man, to receyue the heuenly light  
and bryghtnes, and is ofte reple-  
nyshed therewith: whiche thyng is  
easy to be sene, by her cleynesse,  
& marueylous faire beautye. For  
seyng that beautie it selfe is none  
other thyng, but the clere bryght-

# NOBILITIE OF

nes of goddes bisage naturallpe  
 sette in thinges, ryght fayre shy-  
 nyng in the beautifull bodies of  
 creatures: he therfore hath chosen  
 women befoze men, to be far moze  
 endowed, and mozte abundantly  
 replenished therwith. The propre  
 body of a woman in syght and fe-  
 lyng, is mozte delicate and plea-  
 sant: her fleshe softe and tender:  
 her colour faire and clere: her skin  
 softe and sylke, her head comelye,  
 and decked with heare softe lyke  
 sylke, long, and shynnyng lyke the  
 golde wyre: her countenaunce so-  
 bze: her loke and chere merke and  
 pleasaunt: her face mozte fayre of  
 all creatures, her necke white as  
 milke: her forhed large and high:  
 her eyes rolyng and shynnyng like  
 cristall, verpe ampyable gladsome  
 and gracious: her byowes aboute  
 them,



them, wel sette togyther in pꝛopꝛe  
thyn circles, with a comely playn-  
nesse, deuided equally with a feate  
distaunce, betwene the which, out  
of the middest, descendeth the nose  
straighte and treatise: vnder the  
which is her ruddy mouth, with  
soft and tender lippes, ful pꝛopꝛe-  
ly pꝛopozioned: within the whi-  
che, whan she smileth, her teeth  
do shyne forth, beinge but lyttell  
ones, and sette in egall order, as  
white as the yuoꝝy, and not so ma-  
ny in numbꝛe as a man hath, for  
she is nother greatte eater, by tar,  
noꝝ gnawer: And rounde aboute  
them ryse by her iawes, & cheekes,  
with tender softnes, as ruddy as  
rose, and replenished with Cham-  
fastnes: her chynne rounde, with  
a pꝛety pꝛt therin. Under this she  
hath a small necke, somewhat long

B.iiii.

and

# NOBILITIE OF

and streighte vpryght frome her  
 rounde shulders, with a delycate  
 wescande, whytely, and meanlye  
 thicke and bigge: her voyce smal  
 and shyllie: her speche lowe and  
 swete: her breste brode and well  
 sette out, clothed with euen fleshe  
 and hardnes of her pappes, whi-  
 che are round and euen as her be-  
 ly is: her sydes are softe and ten-  
 der: her backe playn and streyght  
 her armes long and ful: her han-  
 des white and softe, with fingers  
 longe and small, stretched forth a  
 length from the ioyntes, and pro-  
 pely set and knytte to gither: her  
 hyppes, thyes, and legges, well  
 brawned fleshy and full: her fin-  
 gers cudes and toos are propre &  
 rounde, lyke a lyttel circle, and al  
 the partes of her body well furni-  
 shed with humour. More ouer,  
 her

her pace and going is right comely : her mouynge honest : her port and chere very comendable : and in the order of al the body, in Chap figure pproportion and disposition aboue al other. She is farre the fairest creature. In al the hole heape of creatures, there is noo thyng so wonderfull to see, ne noo miracle so maruaylouse to beholde. In so moche, that there is no man, excepte he be starke blynde, but he maye see, that god hym selfe contested and heaped together in woman, what so euer was beautiful in all the holle world: which causeth euery creature to be astroyed and amased at her: yea and many wayes they louen and worshyppe her: in so moch that we se it chance ofte tymes, that the bodiles spirites and diuels are ardently taken

B.iii.

and

# NOBILITIE OF

and rauished with the beautie of  
 women, out of al measure: which  
 opinion is not false, but the truth  
 by many experyences is notablly  
 knowen. And to passe ouer those  
 thynges, that the poetes haue left  
 to vs in wrytynge, of the loue of  
 the goddes, and of theyr louers &  
 concubines, as of Apollo, Daph-  
 nes, Neptuneus, Salmonea, Her-  
 cules, Hebe, Iole, Omphale, and  
 of the other goddis louers, ye and  
 many of Jupiters him self: This  
 gyfte of beaute so diuine, so belo-  
 ued of god and man, holpe wrytte  
 in many places doth hyghly com-  
 mende and prayse, aboue al other  
 gyftes and qualities. For it is red  
 in Genesis, That the chyliden of  
 god, scinge the daughters of men  
 that they were faire, did chose and  
 toke vnto theym wyues, suche as  
 they



they liked. we rede also of **Sa-**  
**ra**, the wyfe of **Abraham**, that she Gen. 12.  
 was fayre, yea the fairest of al wo-  
 men on the erthe. Soo whan the  
 seruant of **Abraham**, had sene **Re-** Gen 24.  
**becca**, a maide of excellēt beautye,  
 he said secretly to hym selfe, **This**  
**is she**, whiche god hath prepared  
 for **Isaac** the sonne of **Abraham**.  
 And **Abigail**, the wyfe of the wic-  
 ked churle **Nabab**, was prudente  
 wyfe and fayre: wherby she saued  
 the life and goodes of her husbād  
 from the fure of kynge **Dauid**. 1. Reg 15.  
 and the yuell man was saued by  
 the fayre woman, for **Dauid** sayd  
 to her these wordes: Go peasably  
 into thy house: loo, I haue harde  
 thy voyce, and honoured thy face.  
 For seynge that all beautie is, ey-  
 ther spirituall, vocal, or corporal,  
**Abigail** was all fayre, in pruden-

# NOBILITIE OF

cy of spirite, in eloquence of spech,  
and beautie of body: whiche cau-  
sed David, after the dethe of Na-  
ball her husbände, to take her to  
his wyfe. And Bathsaba, was a  
womanne of so excellent beautie,  
that David, beinge rauished and  
taken with her loue, after the deth  
of her husband, exalted her aboue  
all other, to be his wyfe & queene.  
Also Abisag, a Sunamite, by rea-  
son she was a mayden most faire,  
was chosen out, to lye with kyng  
David, waringe very olde, to re-  
store his naturall hete. wherfore  
the aged kynges wyll was, high-  
ly to aduance her in honour. And  
also after the dethe of this migh-  
ty kyng, she was enterteyned as  
a queene. We rede of the excellent  
beautie of queene Vasti, and also  
of Hester, which was preferrid be-  
fore

2.Reg.II.

3.Reg.I.

Hester. I.  
ch. 2,

foze the other, bycause she was  
moze goodlye and fayre of face.  
We rede of Judith, whose fayre- Iu. 3 et. 10.  
nesse god so moche encreased, that  
all that behelde her, were wonder-  
fully amased. And shortly to speke Dan. 13.  
we rede that Susanna was ve-  
ry delycate goodly and beautiful.  
We rede also, that after Jobs dy- Iob vii. in  
uers temptations, verations, and fine.  
griuous troubles fynyshed, besy-  
des all other thynges, whiche his  
gret patience deserued, god gaue  
vnto hym thre daughters fayrer  
than the thre Charites, yea there  
were found no where so fayre wo-  
men. More ouer, we maye rede  
hystories of holy byrgins, doubt-  
les to our gret wonder, howe far,  
howe beautifull they were aboue  
al other the childre of men, whose  
laude and prayse the catholyke  
churche

# NOBILITIE OF

churche dothe solempnely synge:  
but specially the prayse of the im-  
maculate and vndefiled pryncesse,  
the mother of god, the virgin Ma-  
rie: whose fayre beautie the sonne  
and moone wöder at, from whose  
moste fayre visage, so great clere-  
nes of beautie, with chastitie and  
holynes dyd shyne, that although  
she moued the myndes, and lyke-  
wyse the eyes of all men, yet for al  
that, no mortall man at any tyme,  
was allured or inticed by her beau-  
tie, ones to thynke amysse.

**T**hose thynges (all thoughe  
some what at lengthe) I haue re-  
herfed vnto you, and that almost  
the very selfe same wordes out of  
holy scripture, where mention of  
beautie is so ofte made: to the in-  
tent we shulde playnely perceyue,  
that the beautie of women is not  
onely



onely among men, but also of god  
hyghly esteemed and honoured.

**I**n an other place of holy scrip- Num. 31.  
ture we lyke wyse rede, that god  
cominanded all the men, and men  
childzen, to be slayne: but the faire  
women to be saued. In the booke Deut. 21.  
of Deuteronomy it was permyt-  
ted to the chyldzen of Israell, eche  
to chose hym a fayre womanne to  
wyfe, of those that were taken pry-  
soners.

**A**nd besydes this wounderfull  
beautie, woman is endowed with  
a certaine dignitie and worthines  
of honestie, whiche is not gyuen  
to man: for the heate of her head  
hangerh downe soo lowe, that yt  
wyl couer and hyde all the pryuy  
partes of her body. Farther, it is  
not nedefull for a woman, to han-  
dle these partes of her body, in the  
woykes

NOBILITIE OF

workes of Nature, whiche man  
customably vseth to doo. Finally  
Nature hath the soo wonderfullye  
wrought for the comelynes of wo  
man, that her priue partes are not  
so apparant as mans, but set in a  
place moze secretely. And nature  
hath gyuen moze shamefastnes to  
woman than to man. Wherfoze it  
hath ofte chanced, that a woman,  
greuouesly dys eased in her priue  
partes, hath chosen rather to dye,  
than to abyde the syght and hand  
lynge of the surgian, to be cured  
and healed. And this shamefast  
honestie they obserue and kepe,  
both in dyenge, and after they be  
dead: as it appereth by them that  
be drownded. For as Plinie and ex  
perience witnesse, a woman ly  
eth grouelyng whan she is deade  
by the fauour that nature bereth  
to her

to her Shamefast honestie: but a  
man swymmeth vpryghte on his  
backe. Farther, the most worthe  
parte of man, wherby we chiefly  
differre from other brute beastes,  
and doo represente the dyuine na-  
ture, is the heade, and in it chiefly  
the countinaunce. Truly a mans  
heade is deformed with baldnes,  
and contrary, a womanne by the  
great pryuilege of nature, is not  
bald. Moreover, the countinaunce  
and face of man is (by the bearde  
to hym hateful) so oft defiled and  
hyd with filthy heares, that scarce  
from brute beastes he may be dis-  
cerned, in woman contrary wise,  
the face doth alway remayn pure  
and comely. Wherfore it was de-  
creed in the law of the .xii. tables,  
that women shuld not scrape nor  
haue theyr chekes, leaste at any  
tyme

# NOBILITIE OF

tyme the bearde shuld growe out,  
 and chaimfastenes be hyd. Alsoo  
 of the clenness and puritie of wo-  
 man, this maye be to all men the  
 moste euydent argumente and to-  
 ken: That a woman ones washed  
 clene ouer, as ofte as she is was-  
 shed afterwarde in cleane water,  
 that water receyueth no spotte of  
 vncleennesse: but a man, be he ne-  
 uer so clene washed, as ofte as he  
 washethe agayne, troubleth and  
 fouleth the water. Furthermore,  
 Nature hath so ordeyned, that wo-  
 men auoid superfluous humours  
 by secrete partes, that men auoide  
 by the face, the moste worthy part  
 of mannes body. And where it is  
 graunted to man aboue all other  
 beastes to haue the face and con-  
 tinuance lokynge vppe to heuen:  
 Nature and fortune haue prouy-  
 ded



ded so wonderly foꝝ woman, and shewed so great fauor, that if she chaunce to fall, she seldome oꝝ neuer falleth on her head oꝝ face.

**S**hall we ouer passe, the pre-ferment of nature to woman aboue man, in the procreation of mankynde: whych thynge is thus very well perceyued. foꝝ on-ly the womans seede (as wytnes- sen Galen and Auicen) is the mat-ter and nourishment of the chyld, and not the mans, whiche is but an accident to the substance. foꝝ as the lawe sayth, the greatest & chiefest offyce and duetye of wo- man, is to conceyue, and to saue that is conceyued. foꝝ which cō- sideration we se very many to be lyke theyꝝ mothers, by resson they be begotten of their bloudde: and this lykenes is very oft well per-

**C**

cep

Galē. 2. de  
Spermate  
&. 14. de v  
tilitate par  
ticularum.  
Aui doc. 5  
Fen. 1. pri  
mi.

# NOBILITIE OF

ceptued in the pꝛoportion and ma-  
 kyng of their bodtes, but it is al-  
 wayes in their maners. Foꝛ if the  
 mothers be foolyshe, the chyldeꝛen  
 pꝛoue foolyshe also. If the mo-  
 thers be wyse, the chyldeꝛen shall  
 haue a sent thereof. But contra-  
 ry wyse it is in the fathers. Foꝛ  
 thoughe they be wyse, yet manye  
 tymes they gette folyshe chyldeꝛen.  
 and foolyshe fathers gette wyse  
 chyldeꝛen, so that the mothers be  
 wyse. And there is none other re-  
 son, why mothers moꝛe than the  
 fathers, shuld loue theyꝛ chyldeꝛen,  
 but that the mothers perceyue,  
 that theyꝛ chyldeꝛen haue, and soo  
 they haue in dede, in theym moꝛe  
 of theyꝛ mothers substance, than  
 of theyꝛ fathers. Foꝛ this cause,  
 that I haue shewed you: I sup-  
 pose it naturally grafte in vs, to  
 be

be moze kynde and louyng to our mothers, than to our fathers. In so moch, that we seme to loue our father meanely, and to loue oure mother hartelye. And for this cause, Nature hath gyuen vnto women, milk of so great strength and vertue, that it not onely nourisheth infantes and babes, but also restoreth such as are brought lowe by sycknes, and is a sufficient foode, to preserve the lyfe of those, that are of perfecte age.

As we rede an example in Valerius Maximus, of a certain yong woman, whiche with the mylk of her breastes nourished her mother in prison, that otherwyle shoulde haue famysched for hunger. For the whiche pietifull dede, her mother was deliuered out of prison, and vnto them bothe a perpetual

Val. li. 5.  
cap. 4.

# NOBILITIE OF

lyuyng was gyuen. And of that  
pꝛison, they made a Temple, and  
called it, The temple of Pitie.

**[**It is well knowen, that foꝛ the  
moze parte, a woman hath alway  
moze pite and mercy than a man.  
Whiche thyng Aristotle doth at-  
tribute to womākynd, as a thing  
appꝛopꝛied therevnto. Wherefoꝛe  
Salomon sayth: where as is no  
woman, there the sycke man wai-  
leth: eyther bycause, that in ser-  
uyng and helppng the sicke, she  
is full diligent, oꝛ els by reason of  
her mery chere, she is full comfoꝛ-  
table: oꝛ els bycause that womā's  
mylke is the chiefe and pꝛincipall  
reliefe foꝛ such as be feble & weke,  
yea beyng broughte to deathes  
dooꝛe, they are therby restored a-  
geyne vnto helthe. And the phisi-  
cions say: That the heat of a wo-  
mans

Arist. de a  
nima,

Eccle. 36.



mans breaſtes and pappes, layde  
and ioyned to the breaſtis of feble  
olde men, conſumed away by age  
ſtrength by encreaſeth, and con-  
ſerueth in them lyuely heate.

Whych thyng was well known  
to Dauid, that in his olde aeye  
choſe the mayden Abiſag, a Su-  
namite, with her collynges & clip-  
pinges to hete & kepe him warme.  
Alſo woman is rather redye and  
more prompt to the holy offyce of  
generation, than man, as it is wel  
known.

**C** Further it is a wonderful my-  
racle of Nature, that a womanne  
bredyng chylde, ſore longyng for  
it, haſte eaten rawe fleſhe, rawe  
fyſhe, coles, erth, ſtones, mettals,  
poypoſons, & many ſuche other lyke  
thynges, which without hurt ſhe  
doth digeſte, conuerſe, and turne

C.iii. into

# NOBILITIE OF

into the hollome nutrimente and substance of the body. How great myracles and maruailes, that nature hath endowd woman with, shal he synd, that redeth throug-ly the volumes and bokes of philosophers and phisitions: whiche for breuenes we here ouerpasse.

**T** Nowe let vs speake of speche and langage, whiche is the gyfte of god, and by whiche one thing we passe and are better than all o-ther brute beastes: Crismegistus Mercurius iudgeth it to be of as great pryce, as moch worth, and as good a thyng, as immortali-tie. And Hesiodus nameth it the chieftest treasure of Mankynde. And is not a womā better spokē, moze eloquent, moze copious and plentyfull of wordes than a man? Do not all we, that be men, lerne  
 fyre

first to speke of our mothers, or of  
our nourses? Truely nature her  
selfe, the former of thinges, sage-  
ly prouidyng for mankynde, gaue  
this gyfte to womankynde, that  
scarce in any place ye shall fynde  
a dumme womanne. Is it not  
right faire and comendable, that  
women shulde excelle men in that  
thing, in whiche men chiefly passe  
all other beastes? But from pro-  
phane matters, lette vs retourne  
home again to holy scripture, and  
begynne at the verye fountaynes  
of our relygion.

**W**e know surely, that god blef-  
sed man for womans sake whiche  
blessynge the vnworthye man de-  
serued not to haue, tyll the womā  
was created and made, wherwith  
Salomon in his prouerbes agre-  
eth: who so fyndeth a good wo-

Pro. 12.

C. iiii. man

# NOBILITIE OF

man, fyndeth a good thinge, and receyueth an holsome benefite of the lozde. And it is wrytten Ecclesiastici. 26. Happy is the man, that hath a vertuous wyfe: For the number of his yeres shall be double. And no man may be compared to him in dignitie, that for his worthynes hath a good woman. For as Ecclesiasticus saythe: A good woman is a gyfte aboue all other gyftes. And therfore Salomon in his prouerbes calleth her, the crowne of her husbände: and Paul, the glorie of man. For glorie is defined to be the accomplishment and perfection of a thinge, restyng and delytyng in his ende: that is to say, when nothing more may be added, to encrease or amēd the perfection thereof. A woman therfore is the ende, perfection, felicitie,

Eccle. 26.

Ibidem.

Pro. 12.

1. Cor. 11.



licitie, benediction, and glozpe of the man: and as Augustin sayth: the fyyste societie and company of mankynde in this moztall lyfe.

Wherfoze of neccellitie every man loueth her, whome who soo ever wyl not loue, but hate, is a stranger not only to all humanitie and gentplinesse, but also to all vertue and grace. And to speake agayne of the Cabalisticall mysteries, Abzaam was blessed of god by the woman Sarah, and takynge the letter H, from the womans name and puttyng it to the mans, called hym Abzaaham. Also the blessing of Iacob was gotten hym, by a woman, his mother. There be many suche examples in holye Scripture: but not to be shewed in this place.

Gene. 17.

Gene. 17.  
& 28.

**T**hus blessing was gyuen fo:  
C.v. the

# NOBILITIE OF

Gene. 2.

the woman, and law for the man:  
 The lawe I say, of anger and of  
 cursynge. For why, the fruyte of  
 the tree was forbiddē to the mā.  
 but not to the woman: which was  
 not than created. For god wolde  
 her to be fre from the begynning.  
 Therfore the manne sinned in ea-  
 tynge, not the woman. The man  
 gaue vs deathe, not the woman.  
 And all we synned in Adam, not  
 in Eua. And we toke oꝝygynalle  
 synne of oure father the man, not  
 of our mother the woman. And  
 therfore the olde law commanded  
 all the malekynde to be circumci-  
 sed, but the females to remayne  
 vncircumcised: that is to witte, he  
 ordeyned the originall synne to be  
 punished onely in that kind, whi-  
 che had trespassed. Furthermore,  
 god rebuked not the woman. for  
 that

that she had eate, but bicause she  
gaue occasion of yuelle vnto the  
man; and that dyd she vnwarely,  
intyced therto by the dyuell. The  
man knew well he dyd amisse: but  
the woman being deceyued, erred  
ignorantly. For she was fyrst temp  
ted of the dyuell, whom he knewe  
to be mooste excellent of all creatu-  
res. And as Bernarde saith: The  
dyuell, seing her wonderful beau-  
tie, and perceyuyng her to be su-  
che one, as he had knowen before  
in the godly lyght, whiche aboue  
all aungels, shoulde reioyce with  
the speche of god: conceived en-  
uie onely ageynst the woman for  
her excellencye. Wherfore Chyste  
borne into this worlde most hum-  
ble and lowe, to thende he woulde  
with his great humilite make sa-  
tisfaction for the synne of pryde,  
com-

# NOBILITIE OF

comitted by our fozfather: he toke  
 vpon hym manhode, as the moze  
 humble and lower kynde, and not  
 womankynde, the moze hygher &  
 noble. Furthermoze, bycause we  
 were condemned foz the synne of  
 the man, and not of the woman,  
 god wolde, that in what kynd the  
 synne was committed, in the same  
 shulde be the purgation of synne:  
 and by the same kinde, whiche ig-  
 nozantly was decepued, we shuld  
 also be reuengid. Therfoze it was  
 said vnto the serpent, that the wo-  
 man, o: moze truly, the seede of the  
 woman, shoulde bzeake his head,  
 and not the man, no: the seede of  
 the man. And perchaunce, hereof  
 it came, that the ozder of pzieste-  
 hode is of the churche rather com-  
 mitted to the man, thā to the wo-  
 man, bycause euerye pzieste dothe  
 repze-



represent Chyſte, and Chyſte, the  
 fyrſt man, that is to wite, the ſyn-  
 ner Adam. To this purpoſe, we  
 vnderſtande the Canon, that be-  
 gynneth, Hęc imago, whiche ſayth  
 that a woman was not made to  
 ymage of god, but to the ſimpli-  
 tude of Chyſte. Yet for all that I  
 ſay, that he beynge verye god) I  
 ſpeake of Chyſte (wold not be the  
 ſonne of man, but of a woman,  
 the whiche he ſo hyghly honored,  
 that of a womanne onely he toke  
 fleſhe and bloudde. For onely for  
 the woman, Chyſt was called the  
 ſonne of man, and not for the mā.

**T**his is that great myracle, at  
 the whiche the prophete ſo moche  
 meruayled: that a woman com-  
 prehended manne, whan a virgin  
 conceyued mankynde, and bare  
 Chyſte in her body.

Hier. 31.

Also

# NOBILITIE OF

Ioan. 20.

Mar. 16.

Luc. 24.

Matt. 27.

**A**lso Chyſte riſynge by ageyn  
from deth to lyfe, appered firſt vn  
to women, not to me. And it is not  
vknown, that after the death of  
Chyſte, men fell from the faythe:  
but it was neuer knowe, that wo  
men ſlypte and fell from Chyſten  
fayth and religion. Farther, there  
was no perſecution of the faythe  
at any tyme, no herelſpe, no errour  
in the faythe, that aroſe and came  
by women, but by menne. Chyſte  
was boughte and ſolde, accuſed,  
condemned, ſcourged, hanged on  
the Crolle, and at the laſt putte to  
cruell deathe onely by men. yea,  
he was denyed of his owne De-  
ter, forſake of his other diſciples,  
and only accompanied wayted v-  
pon and folowed of women vnto  
the crolle and graue. Alſo the be-  
ry wyfe of Pylate, an hethen wo-  
man

man, went aboute, and laboured  
 moze to saue Iesus than any mā,  
 yea any of these men, that beleued  
 in hym. Furthermoze almost the  
 holt schoole of diuines afferme &  
 say, that the churche dyd than re-  
 maine only with the woman, that  
 is to say, with the virgin Marye.  
 And therfoze woman kind is woꝝ-  
 thply called relygious, deuoute,  
 and holp. But yet if any man wol  
 say with Aristotle, that among al  
 beastes and luyng creatures, the  
 male kynd is moze valiāt, strong,  
 wise, and noble: Unto him, a moze  
 excellent man, the great doctour,  
 the holy apostel saint Paule woll  
 answer and say: Those thynges  
 that be folyshe befoze the woꝝlde,  
 god hathe chosen, that he myghte  
 confounde wise menne: and those  
 thynges that be feble and weake

Arist. de a-  
nima.

1. Cor. 1.

NOBILITIE OF

In this worlde, he hathe chosen to  
 confounde the mighty: & the vile  
 and dispised befoze the world god  
 hath chosen: yea & those thynges,  
 which be nothing, & of no reputa-  
 tion: that he myght destroy those  
 thinges, which be in price & moch  
 set by. For who amonge men, in  
 all gyftes of nature and of grace  
 was higher than Adam: yet a wo-  
 man brought him low. Who was  
 stronger than Sampson: A wo-  
 man ouercame his strength. Who  
 was moze chaste than Lot: A wo-  
 man inticed hym to incest. Who  
 was moze religious than Dauid  
 A woman disturbed his holynes.  
 Who was moze wyser than Sa-  
 lomons: a woman deceyued hym.  
 Who was moze paciēt than Job.  
 whom the dyuell stryped out of al  
 his goodes, kyllled all his family,  
 and

Gene. 2.

Judic. 14.  
 & 16.

Gene. 19.

2. Reg. 11

3. Reg. 11.



and chyl dren, and filled al his bo-  
dy full of boyles and soores, and  
yet for all that he coulde not pro-  
uoke hym from the olde simplici-  
tie of his mynde: but the woman  
intyced hym (and in that she was  
more hygher and constaunt than  
the dyuell) and so bered hym, that  
he cursed god. And if it myght be  
lesful to make any copatison with  
Christe, who is most myghtyfull  
and moste wyse, for he is the eter-  
nall and euetlastyng wyse dome  
and power of god: dydde he not  
suffer hym selfe to be ouercome of  
that pooze woman of Chanaan:  
sayinge hym selfe, It is not good  
to take the chyl dernes breade, and  
cast it to dogges. She answered  
and sayde, Trowthe lord, neuer  
the lesse, the dogges eate of the  
crommes, whiche fall frome their

Matt. 15.

D inat:

# NOBILITIE OF

masters table. Now whan Christ perceyued, that he could not ouer come her with that reasonne, he blessed her, sayenge: We it vnto the as thou desyrest.

Ioan., 18.  
Matt. 20.  
Marc. 14.  
Luc. 22.

**W**ho was moze hotte and feruent in the faythe of Christe, than Peter? A woman made hym, so greatte a Mynyster of Chrystis Churche, to denye Christe.

Plant. 8.

Lette the Canonistes crake what they wylle, that they? Churche can not erre, a woman pope mocked her by a goodlye imposture and deceyre.

**B**ut nowe some men wyl say, that those thynges redounde rather to the dysprayse than praysle of women. Vnto whome women shall make this aunswere: If it were so, that one of vs two, must nedes lose eyther goodes or lyfe.

I had

I had leauer to lose the, than to  
be losse my selfe: And that by the  
example of Innocētius the thyrd,  
whych in a certayne pisse decre-  
tall, wryten vnto a cardynall am-  
bassatour, sent frome the See of  
Rome, sayth: If one of vs twain  
muste nedes be confounded, I  
wold rather chose to haue the con-  
founded.

**C**hozeouer, it was prouyded  
by the Cyuile lawes, that women  
might lawfully loke to their own  
profit, to other mens hinderance.  
And in holy writ, is not the iniqui-  
tie of a woman praysed moze then  
a mans wel doing: is not Rachel  
praised, whiche by a proper sleight  
deceyued her father sekynge vnto  
ydols: was not Rebecca lauded,  
whych by craft gotte her sonne  
Jacob the blessing of his fathere

Gene 31.  
Gene. 27.

D.ii. And

# NOBILITIE OF

Iosue. 2.

Iudic. 4.

And afterward by polycie caused him to escape the anger of his brother. The harlotte Raab deceiued those, whiche soughte for the searchers and spies of Iosue: and it was imputed vnto her for ryghtuousnes. Jabel went out to mete Sisar, and sayde vnto hym: My lord, come into me. And askynge water, she gaue hym to drynke of the bottell of mylke, and couered hym, as he laye sleapyng. And whyle Sisara laye and slepte, she entred in pryly, & strake a nayle in his head, and slewe hym, which had put his truste in her promyse and fidelitie, to be saued. And for this notable treason, the Scripture saith: Blessed is Jabel among women, and Jabel shalbe blessed in her tabernacle.

¶ Rede the story of Iudith, and marke



marke her wordes vnto Holofernes. She said : Sp: take and vnderstande the wordes of thy hand mayde. For if thou wylte folowe & do after these wordes, the lord shall make the perfite, and shall bynge thy mattier to prosperous effecte. I shall come and shewe al thynges vnto the, so that I shall leade the throughe the myddes of Hierusalem, and thou shalt haue all the people of Israell, lyke as shepe without a shepeherde, and not soo moche as one dogge shall batke ageynst the. For those thynges ar shewed me by the wisdom and prouidence of god. And thus by her flattering she stroke of Holofernes head, as he lay and slept. I pray you, what wyckedder counsell, what crueller Deceptes, what craftier treson could be inuented?

Pro. 13.

D.iii. And

NOBILITIE OF

And yet holy Scripture blesseth,  
praiseth, and extolleth her, and the  
iniquite of the woman is reputed  
farre better, than a mans wel do-  
inge. But nowe lette vs retourne  
to our pourpose.

**O**f the excellency of so happy  
a kynde of women, this also may  
be to euery man an argumēt most  
eident, that the most excellent of  
all creatures, than whiche neuer  
was, no; neuer shalbe a more wor-  
thy, I meane the most blessed vir-  
gyn Marpe, was conceived with-  
out originali synne: and she was  
not inferiour to Chyiste, touching  
his humanitie.

**T**his is a stronge argumente  
of Aristotle: Of what kynde the  
beste is nobler thanne the beste of  
an other kynde, that kynde muste  
needes be nobler thanne the o-  
ther.

ther. In the Femynyne kynde,  
 the best is the vyrgyn Marye, in  
 the Masculyne, there arose none  
 greater thanne John Baptiste:  
 but howe farre doothe the holpe  
 vyrgyn excelle hym, whiche (as  
 euerye Catholyke man knoweth)  
 was exalted aboue all the orders  
 of aungelles. Lykewyse a man  
 maye reason. Of what kynde  
 the worst is warse than the worst  
 of an nother kynde, that kynde is  
 lower than the other.

Nowe we knowe, that the most  
 byciousse and worst of all creatu-  
 res, is a man, whether it be Ju-  
 das, that betrayd Christ, of whom  
 Christe sayth: It had bene good  
 for that man, yf he had not bene  
 borne: or whether any Antechrist  
 shal come herafter, warse than he.

D.iii.

whi-

# NOBILITIE OF

whiche shall be endowed with all  
 the power of Sathan. More o-  
 uer, holy writ sheweth many men  
 to be condemned to euerlastyng  
 torment: but we rede in no place,  
 of any womanne so condemned.  
 Farther, as a witnesse to our pur-  
 pose, there is a certayne p̄roga-  
 tiue gyuen to the brutalle nature.  
 For the queene of all birdes, and  
 the most noble, is the Eagle, whi-  
 che is alway found of the female  
 kynde, and not of the masculyne.  
 Also this is clere, that the byrd of  
 Egypte, calid Fœnix, wherof there  
 is neuer but one at oones, is a fe-  
 male. But contrary wyse, the ser-  
 pent Regulus, called also Basiliscus  
 the most pestilent of al venimous  
 beastes, is only masculine, of whi-  
 che kynde it is not possible to find  
 a female. Farther the excellencye  
 of



of this kynd, the vertue & innocē-  
cy, is by these argumentes and re-  
sons abundantly mough declared.

Foꝛ the begynnyng of all yuelle  
commeth by men, and not by wo-  
men. Certaynly the fyꝛst man A-  
dam, boldely bꝛeakynge the com-  
maundement of god, dyd shut vp  
the gates of heauen, and made vs  
all subiectes to synne and deathe.

Gene. 3.

Gene. 4.

Foꝛ al we haue synned (and must  
dye) in Adam, not in Eua. whose  
fyꝛste begotten sonne opened hell  
gates. Man was fyꝛst enuious,  
fyꝛst a murderer, fyꝛste the slea of  
his parentes, the fyꝛste dyspayꝛer  
of the mercy of god: the first that  
hadde two wyues, Aamech; the  
fyꝛste dꝛunkarde Nohe: the fyꝛste  
that discouered the fylthynesse of  
his father, Nohes sonne Cham:  
the fyꝛst tyꝛan and idolater Sem-

Gene. 9.

Gene. 10.

D. v.

bꝛoth:

# NOBILITIE OF

broth: the fyrste aduouterer: the  
fyrst defouler of his kynswomen:  
Then also fyrste made confedera-  
cyes with synndes, and inuented  
cursed wythcraftes.

Gene. 37.

Exod. 1.

Gene. 13.

Certayne menne, the sonnes of  
Jacob, fyrst solde theyr owne bro-  
ther Joseph: Pharao, the Egyp-  
tian, fyrste slewe chyliden. Then  
fyrste synned ageynst Nature,  
as wytnessen Sodoma and Go-  
morrath, the whyche sonke for the  
synnes of menne, somme tyme be-  
yng most famous and noble cy-  
ties. We rede in euery place, that  
menne, for theyr rashe voluptu-  
ouse pleasure, hadde two wyues,  
manye wyues, many lemmans:  
they were aduouterers and forni-  
catours. Of this sorte, that hadde  
manye wyues, many concubynes,  
were Lamech, Abraham, Jacob,  
Esau,

Elau, Ioseph, Moles, Sanson,  
Helcana, Saul, Dauid, Salo-  
mon, Assur, Roboam, Abia, Ca-  
leph, Assuerus, and innumerable  
other, the whiche had euery oone,  
many wyues, harlottes, and con-  
cubines. Noz beynge contente to  
marpe many, to fulfull theyr luste  
& pleasure, but also medled with  
their maydens. And we rede not,  
that any woman (except only Bat  
sabea) was contente to haue any  
mo, but alway one husband. Noz  
ye shall not fynde, that anye wo-  
man married two husbādes, if she  
had a childe by her fyrst husband.  
For women in cleynesse of liuing  
and chastitie, are farre moze con-  
tinct than men: the which (as we  
rede) bycause they were batayne,  
haue absteyned from lyenge with  
their husbādes, & haue brought

# NOBILITIE OF

in other, to lye with their husban-  
des, as Sara, Rachel, and many  
other vnapt to generation, which  
brought in their hande maydens,  
that their husbandes myghte get  
chyl dren to succede the. But what  
man I pray you, were he neuer so  
olde, colde, bateyn, and vnapt for  
generation, was euer of so greate  
pittie or myld stomake toward his  
wyfe, that he wolde substitute an  
other manne in his place, to sowe  
fruitefull seede in his wyues plen-  
tifull gardeyne? And althoughe  
we rede, that kyng Licurgus and  
Solon made lawes in olde tyme,  
that is to wyte, if any man beinge  
ouer aged, vnmeete for mariage,  
or otherwise vnlusty to do the de-  
des of Venus, had married a mai-  
den, it shoulde be lausfull for his  
wyfe, to chosse a goodly, and a tall  
younge



younge manne, to dalye and play  
with her, and the chylde gotten  
betwene theym, shoulde be ascri-  
bed to her housbande, and not to  
be called a bastarde: and though  
those lawes were made and esta-  
blyshed, yet we rede not, that they  
were kepte, not so moche throughe  
the sturdynesse of the men, as by  
the chastitie of the womenne refu-  
synge those lawes.

**T**here be innumerable excel-  
lent women, whiche with notable  
clennesse of lyfe, and perfet wiue-  
ly loue, haue farre passed al men:  
as Abigail, the wyfe of Naball:  
Arthemisia, the wyfe of Mausoleus:  
Argia, the wyfe of Polixenus, a Thebane. Julia, the wife of  
Dompeius: Portia, the wyfe of  
Cato: Cornelia the wife of Grac-  
chus: Messalina, the wife of Sul-  
pic:

Arist. de a-  
nima.

1. Cor. 1.

# NOBILITIE OF

pice: Alceste, the wyfe of Admetus: Hypsicratea, the wife of Mithridates, kyng of Pontus: and also Dido, the buylder of Carthage, and the Romayn Lucretia: and Sulpitia, the wyfe of Lentulus. There be innumerable othet, whose hartes were so fyrred on byrgynitie and chastitie, that the very dethe coulde not remoue theym: of whom the examples are manifest and playne: as Athlanta, Calidonia, Camilla, Volscia, Iphigenia of Grece, Cassandra, and Crise. With these gone the Argynes of Lacedemonye, of Spartane, of Milesia, & of Thebes, with other innumerable, of whome the storpes of the Hebrewes, of the Grekes, and of other Nacyons, doo make mencyon, the whyche esteemed byrginitie a-  
boue

houe kyngdomes, yea and aboue  
theyr very lyues.

**C**If the examples also of pitie  
and louing kyndnes be required,  
amonge al other Claudia Vesta-  
lis towarde her father, and that  
pooze yonge woman (of the whi-  
che we spake afoze) towarde her  
mother, are wonderfull.

**C**But here some enuious felow  
wyl object against those thynges,  
the deadely mariages of Samp-  
son, of Jason, of Deiphebus, of  
Agamemnon, and such other tra-  
gedies, on whych (as saythe the  
prouerbe) if a man loke through-  
ly, with clere eyes, he shall fynde,  
that theyr wyues are falsely bla-  
med, of the whych neuer chaun-  
ced vnto a good man one yll. For  
yll wyues neuer chaunce, but to  
ylle husbandes : vnto whome all  
though

NOBILITIE OF

though the good somtyme chāce,  
yet their husbandes byces make  
them naught.

**C**If it had bene lausfull for wo-  
men to make lawes, too wyte hi-  
stories, how gret tragedies (trow-  
pe) wolde they haue wryten of the  
inestimable malice of men, amōg  
whom many ben murtherers, the-  
ues, rauishers of vyrgins, periu-  
ters, robbers, burners of houses,  
traytours: of whome also, in the  
tyme of Josue, & Dauid the king  
so greate a multitude were mur-  
therers & robbers, that they were  
able to make princes capytaynes  
ouer theyr companies. Yea and at  
this day there is an infinite num-  
ber of them. For all prysons be fil-  
led with men, and al the galowes  
in euerpe place be loded with the  
carcases of men. But contrarpe  
wyle,

Josue. 7.

2. Reg. 19.

3. Reg. 4.



wyse, womenne were the fyrste in-  
uentours of all honest craftes, of  
all vertue and benefittes. Whiche  
thyng the very names of sciences  
and vertues, beinge of the feyn-  
nine gender, do playnly specifice.  
Whereof this is a notable profe;  
that the circuite of the hole world  
is callyd by the names of women:  
that is to say of the Nymph, Asia,  
of Europa, the doughter of Age-  
no, of Libia, the doughter of E-  
paphus, the whiche is also callid  
Aphrica. And finally to recite all  
kyndes of vertue, a woman shall  
euery where obteyne the hygheste  
place. For the vyrgin Mary was  
a woman, the whiche fyrst dydde  
bowe her vyrginitie to god, and  
thereby deserued to be the mother  
of god. The womenne prophetes  
were euer mooze inspyred with a

E

mooze

# NOBILITIE OF

more diuine spyrte, than the men,  
whiche thyng is welle knowen,  
by that Lactatius, Eusebius, and  
Augustine wytnessen of the Si-  
bylles.

Lactā. lib.  
insti.

Eus de sp.  
Euangel.

August de  
ci. del. ♀

Exod. 15.

4. reg. 22.

2. Para. 34

So Mary, the syster of Mo-  
ses prophecied: And whan Jere-  
mye was taken prysoner, his vn-  
cles daughter Olda, rose vp and  
prophecied beyonde mans reache,  
to the people of Israell, atte the  
poynte redy to peryshe. Lette vs  
serche holy scripture, and we shall  
fynde, that women in constancye,  
in feythe, and in other vertues ar  
cominended farre aboue men, as  
in Judith, Ruth, Hester, the whi-  
che with so great glory and praisse  
were celebrate and honored, that  
holy bokes beate their names.

Rom. 4.

Genes. 15.

& 21.

And all though Abraham, for the  
stedfastnes of his fayth, is called

In scripture a iuste man, by cause  
 he surely beleued in god: yet for al  
 that, he muste submyt hym selfe to  
 his wyfe Sara. for by y<sup>e</sup> voyce of  
 the lord he was comanded thus:  
 what so euer Sara saythe to the  
 here her voyce. So Rebecca, bele-  
 uyng stedfastly, went to aske god  
 certayne questions, and she being  
 reputed worthy, harde this oracle  
 or aunswere of god. Two maner  
 of folke are in thy bealy: and two  
 maner of people shall be deuyded  
 from thy bealy. And the wydowe  
 Sareptana gaue credence to He-  
 lias, all though he it were harde to  
 beleue that he tolde her. So za-  
 chary, rebuked of the aungell for  
 his incredulitte, was dumme: and  
 his wife Elizabeth, with her wōbe  
 and voyce prophecied: & is pray-  
 sed, bicause she beleued faithfully.

Gene. 25.

Luc. 1.

E. ii. and

# NOBILITIE OF

Luc. 2.

and she afterwarde, prayſed the moſt bleſſed virgin mary, ſaying: Bleſſed art thou, whyche dyddeſt beleue thoſe thynges, that were ſpoken to the of the lord. So Anna the prophetelle, after the reue-  
lation of Simeon coſeſſed god, & ſpake of him to al that wold here, whyche looked for the redemption of Iſrael. And Phylip had foure byrgins to his daughters, which dyd prophecy. What ſhall I ſaye of her the ſamaritan, with whom Chriſte ſpake at the well: and be-  
inge fedde with the faythe of this beleuing womā, reſuſcited the meate that the apoſtelles broughte: To theſe may be ioyned the faithfull woman of Chananee, and the wo-  
man dyſeaſed with the blouddye ſyre. Was not alſo the faith and confeſſyon of Martha, lyke the

con-

Act. 21.

Ioan. 4.  
Matt. 15.  
Marc. 7.  
Mat. 9.  
Mar. 5.  
Luc. 8.  
Ioan. 11.  
Matt. 16.  
Luce. 7.  
Ioan. 19.  
Matt. 27.  
Mar. 16.  
& 17.



confessyon of Peter: The Gospell wytnesseth, howe greate constancy of faith was in Mary Magdaleyn. For whyle the prestes and Jewes crucifyed Christe, she wepeth, she bringeth oyntmentes vnto the Crosse, she seeketh in the Tombe, she asketh the gardynier for hym, she acknowledgeth god, she gothe to the apostels, and sheweth them, that he is risen. They were in doubte therof, but she beleued it verily. Ageyn, what shall I saye, of that holy woman Priscilla, the whiche instructed Apollos, apostolycke man, perfytely learned in the lawe, and byshoppe of the Corinthians: Nor it was no shame for a postell, to lerne of a woman, what he shulde teache in the church.

Luc. 23.  
& 24.  
Act. 18.

Moreover, they that haue shewed

E.iii.

wed

# NOBILITIE OF

wed the stedfastnes of theyr faith  
by sufferynge of Martyrdom, and  
by the dispisynge of deathe, be no  
fewer in number than men. Noz  
that wonderfull mother shuld be  
leste vnspoken of, so woorthy to be  
reimembred, the whiche not onely  
behelde her. vii. sonnes putte to  
deathe, by most cruell martyrdom  
but also she boldly exhorted them  
stedfastlye to dye. And she aboue  
all thynges trustyng in god, was  
after her chylderne cruelly put to  
deathe, for the mayntenaunce of  
the lawes of her countrey.

**T**hyd not also Theodelina, the  
doughter of the kynge of Baua-  
rians, conuerte the Lumbardes  
to the fayth. And Greisilla, the  
syster of Henry the fyrste Empe-  
rour, conuerte the Hungarians.  
& Clotildis, the daughter of the  
kynge

kyng of Burgundia, conuert the  
frenche men : And a certayn wo  
man called Apostola, of a lowe de  
gree, conuerted the Hiberians.

Eche of them turned innumera-  
ble people vnto Christis faythe.

And fynally, this is the onely and  
speciall relygious kynd, in whom  
vnto this day the catholike faith,  
and the continual workes of ver-  
tue and goodnesse doo flouryshe  
and thryue.

**B**ut to the ende that noo man  
shuld doubt women to be as able  
to doo all those thynges that men  
can, let vs handle the matter with  
examplēs : and we shal fynd, that  
there was neuer noble nor wo-  
thy acte, in any kynde of vertue,  
doone by men, but that as noble  
hath ben done by women. In do-  
inge sacrifice, as the paynymys in

# NOBILITIE OF

olde tyme bled, Melyssa Cibeles was the Mynyster, after whose name, the other Goddesses, that bled the priestes offyce, were calld Melyssa. Also Hyppecaustria was Minerva mynyster, Hera of Venus, Iphiginia of Diana. And the mynysters of Bacchus, were very notable, as Thyades, Menades, Bacche, Eliades, Himallonides, Conides, Eubiades, Bassarides, Triaterides. Also amonge the Jewes, Mary Moyses syster, entred with Aaron into the Sanctuarie, and was taken as a mynyster or priest. And although women be forbydden in our religion, to vse the order of presthod yet it appereth by hystories, that a woman on a tyme by counterfaytynge her kynde, was bishoppe of Rome. There haue bene in Chri-

stis

Sanctua-  
ry, a place  
consecrate  
or halo-  
wed.



his churche, many abbasses and nunnes, whiche in olde tyme men disdayned not to calle holy mynisters. There haue bene among all nations, that excelled in prophecienge, as Cassandra, the Sybilles, Mary Moyles sister, Delborra, Holda, Anna, Elyzabeth, the foure doughters of Philip, & many other holy womē of later time, as Brigida and Heldegardis.

Furthermoze, in the inuincible arte magyke, whether it came of good spyrtes or bad. Circes and Medea wroughte farre greater wonders than Zoroastes hym self whiche as many suppose, was the fyrste fynder of the sayde science. Moze ouer in phylosophye, many haue ben very excellent, as Theano the wyfe of Pythagoras, and Dama his daughter was ryghte  
E. v. famous

## NOBILITIE OF

famous, in openynge and declaring her fathers obscure & darke sentences. Also Aspasia and Diotima, Socrates scholars, & Mantinea and Philesia Ariochia, both scholars to Plato. Finally Plotinus highly prayseth Gemina and Amphiclea, Lactantius Themisten. Christis church reioyceth in saynt Caterine, which being but a lyttell mayde, dyd farre passe in lernynge, the wyse menne of that tyme.

**L**et vs not forget in this place the queene Zenobia, scholer to the phylosopher Longinus, whiche for her great vertue and cunning was called Ephenisia, whose holy workis Richomachus translated into Greke.

**L**et vs speake of the oratours arte, and of poetrie. Behold here cometh

comineth Arnelia, Iurna med Andro-  
genea, Hortentia, Lacera, Ua-  
leria, Coptola, Sapho, Corinna,  
Cornificia the Romayne, Erym-  
na, Celia, or Thesbia, whyche  
was named an Epigrammatist,  
in Saluste Sempsonia, in the  
law ciuyl Calphurnia: And were  
it not, that women in our tyme ar  
forbydden, to gyue theym to good  
lernynges, we shulde euen nowe,  
haue women more excellēt in wyt  
and lernynge than menne. What  
shulde we hercof say, that women  
onely by nature are sene to excelle  
the very artificers in all sciences?  
Doo not the Grammarians take  
bpon theym, to be the maysters  
of eloquence? And that do we far  
better lerne of oure nources and  
mothers, than of the Grammati-  
ans. Dyd not Cornelia fourme  
and

# NOBILITIE OF

and falshyon the tongues of her  
 moste eloquent sonnes Gracchi:  
 Dyd not Istrineus mother, teach  
 Syles the sonne of Aripithus,  
 kynge of Scythia, the Greeke  
 tongue: Dydde not the chyl dren  
 bozne of theym that were sente to  
 inhabyte in straunge countreyes,  
 alway obserue and kepe theyr mo-  
 thers tongue, amonge strangers:  
 Surely for none other cause Pla-  
 to and Quintilian so diligentlpe  
 ordeyned a mete and conueniente  
 nource for chylderne to be chosen,  
 but that the chyldernes tongue &  
 speche myght be ryghtlpe and dis-  
 cretely fourmed.

**B**ut nowe, be not the poetes in  
 theyr trifles & fables, & the logiti-  
 ans in their cōtentious talking o-  
 uercome of women: Ther was ne-  
 uer oratour so good or so happy,  
 that



that in perswasyon coulde get the  
bpper hande of an harlot: what  
arithmetrician by false recknyng,  
coulde deceyue a woman in paye-  
ment of her det: or what musitian  
can compare with a woman in sin-  
gynge and swetenesse of breaſte:  
Be not these Phylosophers, these  
astrologians, in theyr diuynatiōs  
& foꝛ knowleges many tymes infe-  
riours to the cōtrey wiues: yea &  
very oft tymes a sely olde woman  
excelleth the phisitian: Socrates  
hym selfe (aboue all other reckned  
the most wyse man) being very a-  
ged, dyd not disdaine to be taught  
of the womā Aspasia. Lyke as A-  
pollo, a man so wel lerned in Chri-  
stis doctrine, was not ashamed to  
be taught of the womā Priscilla.  
¶ Nowe foꝛ prudence, you maye  
take foꝛ examplers those women.

Opis

NOBILITIE OF

Iudic. 4.

Opis for her wysedome counted a  
goddesse: Plotina wyfe of Etola-  
nus theemperour: Amalasuntha,  
the queene of Ostrogottes: Emi-  
lia the wyfe of Scipio: with who  
reken Delboza, the wyfe of La-  
bidoth, a meritiaylouse wyfe wo-  
man, whiche(as we rede in Judi-  
cum) was a cettayn tyme Judge  
ouer the people of Israel, and the  
chylderne of Israell came vp to  
her for iudgement in all causes.

And whan Barach refused to go  
ageynste their ennemies, excepte  
she wolde go with hym, Delboza  
was chosen capitayne of the host  
of Israell: and sleynge and dys-  
comfytynge theyr foes, she retur-  
ned home with vyctorie.

4. Reg. 2.  
2. Par. 22.

More ouer, it is redde in the  
fourth boke of kingis, that queene  
Attalia reigned, & was souerayne  
Judge

Judge in Ierusalem seuen yeres  
 space. And Semiramis, after the  
 deathe of kynge Ninus, iudged  
 the people .xl. yeres. And all the  
 quenes of Ethiope, called Can-  
 daces, were moſte wyſe, and reig-  
 ned moſte myghtely: of whomit  
 is wrytten in the actes of the apo-  
 ſtels. And meruaylouſe thynges  
 of them ſpeaketh the faithfull wry-  
 ter of antyquytie Joſephus. Alſo  
 Nicania, the quene of Saba, cam  
 from the ende of the world, to here  
 the wyſedome of Salomon, and  
 as Chriſt witneſſeth, ſhe ſhall con-  
 demne all the people of Hieruſa-  
 lem. And there was a certain wiſe  
 woman of Thecoa, whyche con-  
 cluded kynge Dauids demaunde  
 with a queſtion, with a ryddle ſhe  
 taught hym, and by the exāple of  
 god, ſwaged his wꝛath. Noꝝ here

Act. 8.

Ioſ. li. aut.

3. Reg. 10.

2. Paral. 9.

Matt. 12.

Luce. 11.

2. Reg. 14.

1. Reg 25.

3. Reg. 1.

we

# NOBILITIE OF

we shulde not forget Abigail and Bathsaba, of whiche two Abigail deliuered her husbände, from the wrathe of Dauid, and after the deathe of her husbände she was queene and wyfe of Dauid. The other, the mother of Salomon, by her prudēcy opteyned, that her sonne was kynge.

**M**ore ouer, in the Inuention of thynges, Isis, Minerva, Nicotrata, be examples. In rulyng of realmes, and buyldynge of cities women excelle: Sēmiramis was the souerayne gouernour of the vniuersall worlde: Dido was the buylder and queene of Carthage: the Amazones were moſte worthy in warre and polytyke in peace. In the bolde byckerynges of battayle, what a woman was Thomiris the queene of Massageta=



getaries: She ouercame Cyrus  
the gret conquerour and puissant  
kyng of Persians. Also Camil-  
la, of the Volscians, and Valisca  
of Boheme, were two most migh-  
ty queenes. We rede of many o-  
ther moste noble women, whiche  
by theyr wonderfulle power and  
polycie, in moste extremyte, and  
whan there was no hope of helpe  
loked for, recouered theyre coun-  
trei, and restored it to wealthe a-  
geyne. Amonge whome is Ju-  
dith, whiche saynt Jerome hygh-  
lye prayseth with these wordes:  
Take Iudith the wydowe, the ex-  
ample of chastite, declare her with  
triumphant prayse and perpetual  
commendation. For god gaue her  
to be an example, not only for wo-  
men, but also for men to folowe,  
whiche for a rewarde of her cha-  
stite,

NOBILITIE OF

titie, armed her with suche vertue, that she vanquished him that was inuincible to all menne, and subdued hym, that no man coulde overcome.

2. Reg. 20

**C** Further, we reade, that a certayne wise woman called vnto her Joab the capitayne, and deliuered into his handes the heade of Siba, the enemye of Dauid, to the intente to saue the citie Abela, from destruction, whiche was the chiefe citie of Israell. And a certayne woman, threw a piece of a myl stone vpon Abimelechs head and brake his brayne panne, executing the vengeance of god vpon Abimelech, because he hadde done yll befoze god agaynst his father, in sleinge. lxx. of his brether vpon one stone.

Judic. 9.

Hest. 7. 8.

**S**o Hester, the wyfe of kynge Assuer

Assuer, not only deliuered her people from the moste shamefull death but also made theym ryght honorable.

**C**oehanne Coriolanus with the Volscians, had besieged Rome, & soo sharply assailed it, that the Romaines were not able to defende them selues agaynst hym: an auncient woman Veturia his mother, soo handled the mattier, that she ouercame his rage and furpe, and reconcyled hym ageyn to the Romaines. Arthemisia, whan the Rhodians came fiercly vpon her, both dissapoynted them of theyr nauye of shyppes, and conquered that Ilande, and sette vp her Image within the citie of Rhodes, as a perpetuall note of infamy vnto them.

**H**owe moche doo the frenche  
f.ii,      men

Anno dñi  
1428.

NOBILITIE OF

men prayse a yonge damsell, whiche beinge descended of a lowe lineage, toke vpon her after the manner of the Amazons, to leade the forward of the army: & she fought so valiantly, and hadde soo good chaunce, that the French men beleued verily, that by her promesse, they recouered the reline of France out of the Englyshe mens handes: And therfore, to the perpetual remembrance of her, they made an ymage of a mayden to be sette vp in Distaunce on the brydge ouer the ryuer of Liger or Loier. I coulde yet reherce out of the histories of the Grekes, of the Latines, and other barbarous nations innumerable mooste excellent women, but to the ende this worke shulde not be to greate a volume, I studyed to be bryefe. For Plutarche



tarche, Valerius, Bocatius, and many other haue wryttē the praise of noble women: And therfoze I haue spokē but lytel of their praises, but ouer passed verye manye thynges. Foꝛ why, I am not soo presumptuous, to thynke my selfe able, to cōprehend in few woꝝdes, þ̄ infynite nobylities & vertues of womē. Foꝛ who is able thzoughly and perfectly to recyte the infinite prayses of women, of whome we take all oure lyfe and substaunce, and in whome is all the conseruation of mankynde, the whyche els schulde peryshe and decay in short tyme: on whome also euery familye and common welthe dependeth: This thyng was well known to the buylder of Rome, whiche bycause he lacked women, rauyshed and caried away the Sa-

bines daughters, not doubtinge  
 the cruel warre that shuld folowe  
 therupon. For he knewe, that su-  
 che an empire wolde in short time  
 perishe, yf they wanted women.  
 And at laste, whan the Capytoll  
 was taken by the Sabynges, and  
 that in the myddes of the market  
 place, they foughte moste cruellye  
 hande to hande, with the sodayne  
 runnyng of the women betwene  
 bothe the hostes, the battayle ces-  
 sed: and at the laste a peace being  
 made, and a truce taken, they con-  
 cluded a perpetual amitie. For the  
 whych cause Romulus regestred  
 these womens names in the cour-  
 tes and courte rolles. And it was  
 by the Romaynes assente decreed  
 and wrytten in the common ta-  
 bles, that women shuld not grind  
 at the quyme, noz drudge in the  
 kytchen

kitchen: no: the husbände shulde  
not say: wife; I giue the this: no:  
the wyfe: Husbände, I gyue you  
this: bycause they shulde knowe,  
that euery thyng betwene theym  
was cōmon. And hereof at length  
grew a custom, that whan y new  
wedded wyfe was brought home,  
she wolde saye: vbi tu, ego, that is  
where you be lord, I am ladye:  
where you be maister, I am may-  
stresse. Moreouer, great honours  
tokens of high reuerence and di-  
gnitie were done to women by de-  
cree of the Senatours, as these:  
that in the way they shulde go on  
the vpper hande: and that men  
shuld clype on their fete vnto them  
a gyue them place. Furthermore,  
it was graunted theym, to weare  
purple garmentes, embrowdred  
about with gold, ornaimentes dee-

## NOBILITIE OF

ked with pꛑecious stones, rynges  
at theyꝝ eares, & chaynes of golde  
about theyꝝ neckes. And it was at  
the last decreed by the emperours  
lawes, that as ofte as any statute  
was made in any place, foꝝ byd-  
ding oꝛnamentes oꝛ apparayle to  
be woꝛne, women shoulde not be  
comꝑꝛehended vnder that lawe.  
Also it was granted theym, to re-  
ceyue herpytage and succession of  
goodes, & the funerals of women  
to be celebrate and honourablye  
kepte, as the funeralles of noble  
men were. Foꝝ why on a time whā  
a gyfte shoulde be sente to Apollo  
Delphicus, as Camillus had vo-  
wed, and that there was not soo  
moche golde in the cytie: the wo-  
men of theyꝝ owne good wylles,  
brought in the iewelles and oꝛna-  
mentes of theyꝝ bodies.

And



**A**nd in the warre that Cyrus made agaynst Astiages, the Persians armye was by the castygation of women reprehended, and being newly restored againe, opteyned a right worthy byctorye.

For the whiche dede Cyrus made a lawe, that kynges of the Persians entrynge into the cytie, shuld paye to euerye woman a piece of golde. The whiche thynge also kynge Alexander, entrynge twyse into that citie payd twyse. Ye and moze ouer, he commaunded the gyft to be doubled to women with chylde. So from the moste auncient kynges of the Persyans and Romaines, yea from the very begynnynge of the citie of Rome and empire, women were hadde in all hygh honour and reuerence: and the very emperours theym selues esteemed

# NOBILITIE OF

esteemed theym moste highly. For  
 Justynian the emperour, in ma-  
 kynge of lawes, thoughte it con-  
 ueniente, to haue the counsaylle  
 and aduysle of his wyfe. And in  
 an other place, the law sayth, that  
 the wyfe shyneth in the honour of  
 her husbände, and the brightnes  
 of his dignitie beautifieth her, for  
 the higher the husband is aduan-  
 ced in honour, the higher is his  
 wyfe. Soo the Emperours wyfe  
 is callid emperesse, the kingis wife  
 quene, the princis wyfe, the prin-  
 cesse: and is therby enobled, howe  
 lowe so euer she be of byrthe. And  
 Ulpian the lawyer sayth. A prince  
 that is to saye, the Emperoure or  
 kynge, is aboue the lawes, and al-  
 though the emperesse is bonde by  
 the lawes, yet the emperour frely  
 granteth her as great priuileges  
 as

as he hath hym selfe. wherfoze it  
is permitted vnto noble women,  
to iudge, to arbytrate and decyde  
matters, to doo and take homage  
and fealtie, to keepe courtes, and  
mynyster Justyce amonge theyr  
tenauntes. And for this pour-  
pose, the woman may haue coue-  
nant seruauntes of her owne, as  
well as the man may: and a wo-  
manne may be iudge, yea amonge  
straungers. She maye also gyue  
name to her familie and kynted:  
so that the chyldeyn shalbe named  
after their mother, and not after  
their father. And in dyuerse pla-  
ces of the lawe cyuple, womenne  
haue, touchynge theyr doweries,  
many great priuileges graunted  
them. Where amonge other thyn-  
ges it is ordeyned, that a woman  
of good name and fame, shall not  
be

## NOBILITIE OF

be imprysoned for dette, and the  
 Judge, that comynytteth her to  
 pryson, shall lose his heed. If she  
 be suspected of any faute, she shall  
 be putte into a monasterye or se-  
 crete place, or elles be delyuerid to  
 womē, to be imprysoned by them.  
 For the lawe saythe, A woman is  
 of better state and conditiō than  
 a man: and also in one selfe kynd  
 of offence, the manne trespasseth  
 moze than the woman. Wherefore  
 the man taken in auoutrie, loseth  
 his head: but the woman aduou-  
 terer is put into a monasterye.  
 Also the Lawyer gethereth moze pri-  
 uiledges for the womenne in his  
 Summe and brieve Annotation  
 vpon the title named, Ad Senatus  
 consulum uelleianum, & Speculator  
 vpon the title De renuntiationibus.  
 Also the auntyente lawe ma-  
 kers



kers and stablyshers of common  
wealthes, the moſte graue, wyſe,  
and prudent menne, Licurgus I  
ſay, and Plato, knowynge verve  
welle by the ſecretes of Phyloſo=  
phy, that women were not inferi=  
ours to men, neyther in excellen=  
ce of mynde, noꝝ in ſtrengthe of  
bodye, noꝝ in dygnitie of Nature,  
but lyke able vnto all thynges,  
decreed and made lawes, that wo=  
men ſhoulde exerciſe ſuche may=  
ſtries as men vſed, yea all ſeates  
perteynyng to the warre, in the  
bolwe, in the ſlynge, in hurlyng  
of ſtones, in ſhotynge, in fygh=  
tyng in armour, as well on hors  
backe as on foote, in pytchyng of  
tentes, in ſettyng men in arraye,  
and couductynge of an hoſte: and  
to be bꝛiefe, they ordeyned, that  
women ſhuld as cōmonly as men  
vſe

# NOBILITIE OF

vse all maner exercyses. Lette vs  
 rede writers of antiquitie, worthy  
 to be beleued, and we shall fynde,  
 that in Getulia, Bactris, and Gal  
 letia, the maner was, that meinne  
 gaue them selfes to ease and Deli  
 cacy, and the women to plow and  
 tylle the ffeldes, to buylde, to bye  
 and sel, to ryde, to go on warfate,  
 and to do all other thynges, wht  
 che nowe amonge vs the men do.  
 Amonge the Cantabrians, men  
 gaue dowerye to the women, bre  
 therne wete gyuen to mariage by  
 theyr sisters, doughters were ap  
 poynted to be hetres. Amonge the  
 Scythians, the Thracians, and  
 Frenche menne, all worthy dedes  
 were as comonly done by women  
 as by men, and in matters concer  
 nyng warre and peace, women  
 were called to councele, to gyue  
 theyr

they? aduylse and sentence. Which  
thyng the Cruce that the Celtes  
made with Hammisball, dothe well  
declare to be trewe, by these woꝝ-  
des: If any of the Celtes com-  
playne, to haue had wronge of a-  
ny of the Carthaginences: of that  
thing let the rulers & officers of  
Carthaginences, oꝝ els the capy-  
taynes which shal be in Spayne,  
be iudges: If any of the Cartha-  
ginences hath hadde any wronge  
done hym, by anye of the Celtes,  
lette the women of the Celtes be  
iuges, and determyne that thyng.  
But by the great tyranny of men,  
preuaylynge ageinst the lawes of  
god and nature, such libertie was  
gyuen to women.

**T**hou wylte saye, that is nowe  
foꝝbydden by lawes, abolished by  
custome, extincted by education.

For

## NOBILITIE OF

For anon as a woman is borne euen from her infancy, she is kept at home in ydelnes, & as though she were vnnete for any hygher busynesse, she is pmitted to know no farther, than her nedle and her threede. And than whan she cometh to age, able to be married, she is delpuered to the rule and gouernance of a telous husband, orels she is perpetually shutte vp in a close nountye. And all offyces belongynge to the common weale, be forbydden theym by the lawes.

For it is not permitted to a woman, though she be very wise and prudent, to pleade a cause before a Iuge. furthermoze, they be repelled in iurisdiction, in arbitrement, in adoption, in intercession, in procuration, o to be gardeyns o tutours, in causes testametary  
and



and criminall. Also they be repel-  
led frome preachynge of goddes  
worde, agaynst expresse and playn  
scripture, in whych the holy gost  
promised vnto them by Iohel the  
prophet, sayeng: And your daugh-  
ters shall propheticke and preache:  
lyke as they taught openly in the  
tyme of the apostels: as it is well  
knowen, that Anna the wydowe  
of Symeon, the daughters of  
Phylipp, and Priscilla, the wyfe of  
Aquila dydde. But the vnworthy  
dealyng of the later lawe makers  
is so great, that breakyng goddes  
commaundemente, to stablysh  
theyr owne traditions, they haue  
pronounced openlye, that women  
otherwyse in excellency of nature,  
dignitie, and honour most noble,  
be in condiction more hyle than all  
men: And thus by these lawes,

Iohel. 2.

G

the

# NOBILITIE OF

the women being subdewed as it  
were by force of armes, are con-  
strained to giue place to men, and  
to obeie theyr subdewers, not by  
no naturall, no diuine necessitie  
of reason, but by custome, educa-  
tion, fortune, and a certayne ty-  
rannicall occasion.

**F**urthermore, there be somme  
men, whych by relygion, clayme  
authoritie ouer women, and they  
proue theyr tyranny by holy scrip-  
ture: the whiche haue this cursed  
sayenge, spoken to Eue, continu-  
ally in theyr mouth: Thou shalt  
be vnder the power of man, and  
he shall haue lordeshyp ouer the.  
But yf it be answered vnto them,  
that Chyste toke awaye that cur-  
sed sayenge: they wyl objecte a-  
gerne the wordes of Peter, with  
whome Paule agreeth, sayenge:  
Lette

Genel. 2.

Genel. 2.

2. Pet. 3.

Ad col. 3.

Ad eph. 5.

Lette women be in subiection of  
 theyr husoandes. Lette women in  
 the churche kepe silence. But he  
 that knoweth the dyuers figures  
 of Scripture, and the effectes of  
 the same, shall soone se, that these  
 thynges be not repugnant but in  
 the kynde. For this is the order in  
 the churche, that men in ministra-  
 tion shall be preferred before wo-  
 men: lyke as the Jewes in pro-  
 myssion are before the Greekes:  
 yet neuerthelesse God is not accep-  
 ter of persones. For in Christ nei-  
 ther male nor female is of value,  
 but a newe creature. And manye  
 thynges were permitted vnto me,  
 for the hardenelle and crueltie of  
 theyr hartes agaynste women: as  
 in times past diuorces were gran-  
 ted vnto the Jewes, whiche for al  
 that nothyng hurteth the dignitie

Rom. 2.  
 Act. 10.

# NOBILITIE OF

of women: But whan men committe offence and erre, the women haue power of Iudgement ouer theyn, to the great shame and rebuke of menne. And that quene Saba shall iudge the men of Ierusalem. Therfoze they, whyche beynge iustified by fayth: are become the sonnes of Abraham, the chylderne I say of promysion, be subdewed to a woman, and bounden by the cōmandement of god, sayenge to Abraham: what so euer Sara saith vnto the, folow it.

Gene. 22.

**C** Nowe at laste, bze fely to recollecte, fyrste, I haue shewed the great excellency of womankynd, by her name, order, place, and matter, and what greate dignitie she hath obtained of god aboue man: Farther I haue declared it by religion, nature, humayne lawes,  
by



by diuers authorities. reason and  
examples, myngling one with an  
other. And yet haue I not so mo-  
che sayd, but that I haue left mo-  
che more vnsayd. For neyther  
Ambition, nor the cause of myne  
owne commendation, but my du-  
tie and the very truthe moued me  
to wyte: lest that I, as one com-  
myttyng sacrilege (holdyng my  
peace) shuld seme priuily to steale  
and brybe away by a certayn we-  
ked silence, from so noble a kynde,  
the laudes and pyses due to it,  
as it were, burienge in the ground  
the talente that god hath gyuen  
me. But yf anye man more cury-  
ous than I, shal fynde any argu-  
ment or reason, that hath escaped  
me, whiche he thynketh worthy  
to be added to this my booke, I  
will not recken my selfe blamed,  
but

**NOBILITIE OF**

but rather holpen thereby, in that  
this my worke, by his wytte  
and counnyng, he wolle  
make better. There-  
fore lest this  
worke shuld  
growe to  
ouer  
great a volume, here  
I make an ende

**FINIS.**

Londoni in ædibus Thomæ Berthe-  
leti typis impress. Cum pri-  
uilegio ad imprimen-  
dum solum.

**ANNO M.D. XLII.**

